

RESOLVING EVERYDAY CONFLICT

Week 7: Go and Be Reconciled—
Forgiveness Part 1

THE DIFFICULT TOPIC OF FORGIVENESS

- Reconciliation only comes with both *resolution* of the conflict and *restoration* of the relationship.
- Reconciliation is the giving and receiving of genuine forgiveness
- Though Christians have been forgiven and reconciled to God and therefore, should be the quickest to forgive, many Christians struggle with bitterness and unforgiveness.
- The topic of forgiveness raises interesting and difficult questions: What does “I forgive you” really mean? Do I forgive someone who has not repented? What about the consequences?

DISCUSS

- What specific elements—both words and actions—were problematic with Phil's forgiveness?

UNPACKING FORGIVENESS

- What forgiveness is not:
 - A feeling
 - Forgetting
 - Excusing
- What forgiveness *is*:
 - A decision modeled after God's forgiveness of us—a decision to cancel a relational debt and to not hold an offense against an offender.
 - “Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.” Eph. 4:32

A TWO-TIERED PROCESS

- Attitudinal Forgiveness: Release the Offense to God
 - A heart posture; A disposition of forgiveness toward the offender
 - Acts 7:60; Lk. 23:34
 - Does not require the offender asking forgiveness (Rom. 12:18)
- *“When we strive against all thoughts of revenge; when we will not do our enemies mischief, but wish well to them, grieve at their calamities, pray for them, seek reconciliation with them, and show ourselves ready on all occasions to relieve them. This is gospel forgiving.”* Thomas Watson

A TWO-TIERED PROCESS

- Transacted Forgiveness: Relational Restoration
 - Requires the offender asking for forgiveness (Matt. 18:26-27)
- Completes the cancellation of a relational debt *provided genuine forgiveness* (1 John 1:9)
- *Transacted* forgiveness cannot happen without *attitudinal* forgiveness

DISCUSS

- **Genuine, transacted forgiveness is difficult enough, but attitudinal forgiveness is even more difficult for most people. What are the reasons for this?**

HAVE I FORGIVEN? IDENTIFYING ONGOING BITTERNESS

- **Do you hope the best for the person who offended you? Do you hope they prosper and that the Lord blesses the work of their hands?**
- **Do you find yourself frequently returning to this offense in your mind and marinating in it? Does this become particularly acute when you see this person?**
- **Do you tend to label this person in your head as, “the person who did X?”**
- **Do you continue to bring the offense up in conversation with the offender or others as a “reminder” after you have extended “forgiveness?”**
- **Despite your extension of “forgiveness,” do you feel a strong aversion to restoring the relationship to what it was (or better) before the offense?**

DISCUSS

- Fundamentally, why is bitterness often so difficult to overcome?

CLOSING THOUGHTS

- Consider against whom you may be bitter, and be honest with God about your struggle with unforgiveness.
- Share your struggle with others without gossiping.
- Next time, we will close out our series with discussing what true forgiveness looks like in practice, how to think about consequences for sin and how to learn in our relationships moving forward.